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Applying the Theory of Discursive Analysis to Governance of Forced Migration

Umut Korkut^a

Abstract

This article deals with the political responses of the Turkish Republic when faced with incursions of refugees from its neighboring countries forced to migrate due to conflicts. It develops a general argument that the restrictive Turkish asylum regime and aversive Turkish public philosophy to immigration have enforced political authorities to continuously resort to discursive rather than institutionalized means to handle impacts of forced migration. Responding to increasing cases of forced migration and the resulting influx of refugees from the bordering countries, therefore, the Turkish political authorities have pursued selective policy responses resting on narratives. Via strategic discourses, these narratives have expressively embedded the Syrian as an “acceptable refugee” in political responses to forced migration. The acceptable refugee in this instance is the one that implies historical and social responsibilities for Turkey, given its history. The outcome is the discursive construction of some as acceptable rather than extending institutionalized refugee rights for all.

Keywords

Turkey • Forced migration • Syrians • Discursive governance • AKP

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Introduction: Context Description and the Restrictive Asylum Regime in Turkey

This article recommends that when studying forced migration, we need to take into account modes of discursive regimes that political authorities may pragmatically utilize. It assesses the application of discursive regimes vis-à-vis institutionalized responses when political authorities are faced with the forced migration of people from a foreign territory into their native one. The context selection is the Turkish case and Turkey's handling of the Syrian refugee crisis. The narrative that has influenced the governance of the migration regime in Turkey at the face of the influx of Syrian refugees is under study. To this extent, particular discourses at play will be noted inasmuch as they seek to attune the collective rationality to accept Syrians, due to the historical and religious responsibilities of the Turkish nation toward them and in a way to continue with "what has always been the case" with Turkish state traditions – even prior to the Republic. While analyzing the discursive governance of Syrian migration, the article will give references to collective memory generation by the political authorities as a means to garner political support. In that respect, the article underlines that the current discursive regime welcomes only those that have religiously, ethnically, and politically acceptable backgrounds to the political ideology in government and its voter base.

Essentially, this article deals with the political responses of the Turkish Republic when faced with incursions of refugees from its neighboring countries forced to migrate due to conflicts. It develops a general argument that the restrictive Turkish asylum regime and aversive Turkish public philosophy (Korkut, 2014) to immigration have forced political authorities to continuously resort to discursive rather than institutionalized means to handle the impact of forced migration. Responding to increasing cases of forced migration and the resulting influx of refugees from the bordering countries, therefore, the Turkish political authorities have pursued selective policy responses resting on narratives. Via strategic discourses, these narratives have expressively embedded the Syrian as an "acceptable refugee" in political responses to forced migration. The acceptable refugee in this instance is the one that implies historical and social responsibilities for Turkey, given its history. The outcome is the discursive construction of some as acceptable rather than extending institutionalized refugee rights for all. The recent Syrian crisis shows that narratives, rather than institutions, operate in Turkey's migration regime. However, the Syrian case is not a singular case considering the earlier cases of Turkish selective humanitarian assistance to refugees. In conclusion, this article shows that following a discursive methodology to examine a government's response to forced migration could be an effective method not only to understand how policies operate temporally and selectively, but also to follow the guidance of narratives rather than institutions with universal implications.

The Turkish asylum regime limits itself to accepting asylum applications only from European nationals. Other nationalities can gain temporary residence in Turkey while UNHCR deals with their cases – which can take years in many instances, but they can neither leave their places of temporary residence nor do they have any employment rights while in wait. Despite the geographical limitation however, depending on their ideologies, governments have been lenient toward certain refugee groups. The Turkish immigration and refugee policies have always been biased in favor of people of Turkish descent and culture – but only as long as such persons were of Sunni/Hanefi background. The Republic emphasized Turkish language and ethnic affiliation in respect to its immigration policies, but remained silent with respect to religion. Yet, the actual practice reveals a striking preference for admitting immigrants with a Sunni/Hanefi religious background as the religious backgrounds of the overwhelming majority of immigrants admitted to Turkey speak for themselves (Kirisci, 2000, p. 3). Therefore, an aversion of foreignness has affected Turkey's immigration policies. As an example, in 1989, 310,000 Turks and Pomaks from Bulgaria were granted easy access to refugee status, while a similar possibility was denied to Kurdish asylum seekers who fled to Turkey from Iraq in 1988 and 1991. While the European background of the former might explain why they acquired asylum in Turkey, similarly European Gagauz nation from Moldova were not given asylum. This was despite their ethnically and linguistically Turkish background, but due to their being members of the Orthodox Church. A stark example of the practice of prioritizing people of Sunni/Hanefi backgrounds in asylum decisions was the settlement of 4,163 refugees from Afghanistan living in camps in Pakistan in an area in eastern Anatolia in 1982 on the basis of their Turkic descent, their being as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Turkmen (Baydar Aydingün, 1998-1999; Kirisci, 2000, p. 6, 7, 10). Thereby, the Turkish refugee regime until now has precluded the immigration of people of foreign descent while facilitating the integration of those with acceptable inherent traits, such as religion and ethnic descent. Looking at the Syrian case, this article argues that recent AKP-led humanitarianism follows the earlier governments' relaxing asylum laws when faced with forced migration of people with similar characteristics to the majority of Turkey's population. At the same time, the article presents that the characterization of acceptability, hence the making of "acceptable refugee" vis-à-vis the "unacceptable one" also rests on the government's operationalization of strategic discourses.

In order to explain restricted asylum and the pragmatic making of the so-called deserving refugee, this article follows the discursive governance paradigm (Korkut, Mahendran, Bucken-Knapp, & Cox, 2015). Discursive governance refers to implicit mechanisms of governance resting on narratives, leitmotifs, and strategic metaphors in political language, as well as the subsequent framing of policies using such language to interpose ideas in order to affect political and social representations within the public sphere in accordance with the wishes of political authorities (Korkut et al., 2015). In

effect, when investigating how narratives affect the governance of forced migration, I spell out discursive governance as a process in which political discourses can become normative mechanisms to influence the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015).

Thereafter, I concentrate on illustrating how a process of “discursive governance,” which appeals to the collective memory of the Turkish state as a “charitable” polity with close personal relations with the Syrian nation, has contributed to political responses at the central and local administration since the start of the refugee crisis. It also appears that the discursive making of selective humanitarianism toward Syrians also reflects on “how things have been and always are” in Turkey and with the Turkish society. Strategic discourses have qualified what later emerges, according to Turkish officials, as an “innovative” policy making to respond to the troubles of Turkey’s “temporary guests.” These discourses have efficiently substantiated “selective opening” and “preferential treatment” narratives rather than assisting a formally institutionalized immigration system whereby the rights of immigrants and the responsibilities of the host state and nation toward the immigrants are definite. The following section outlines how I apply the discursive governance paradigm as a method to study the handling of the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey. Following that, I will present the research methodology and the empirical evidence that I gathered from interviews to discuss the uses of discursive governance theory in the study of forced migration.

Concepts of Discursive Governance

Discourse begins among people who hold different opinions and interpretations and who learn and refine their ideas as they share them with others. Viewing politics as a discursive process means that it is not a mechanical process whereby actors formulate a goal, devise a strategy to achieve the goal, and struggle with others as they employ their strategy. Instead, drawing on existing cultural and ideological symbols, actors develop a set of ideas and share them with others. The dominant method for discursive research has thus far been discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008). The discursive institutionalists approach politics as a vigorous arena whereby discursive interactions prompt actors to refine, reframe, and reinterpret their ideas. Not only is this process iterative and sometimes refers to contentious discourses in play between actors, it also informs the evolution of political institutions. The ideas that define institutions, as well as the ideas shared by political actors, are in flux, often at odds, and malleable (Béland & Cox, 2011a, p. 10). To respond to this influx, discursive institutionalism foregrounds a logic of communication that permeates the discourse in which actors engage in the process of generating, deliberating, and/or legitimizing [justify] ideas about [social] political action in institutional context (Schmidt, 2008).

The discursive governance paradigm originates from discursive institutionalism. While the latter foresees deliberation, coordination, and communication in the

political sphere by political actors and the public, discursive governance instead concentrates on explaining the inculcation of ideas by political authorities to affect collective rationality in the same political sphere. Hereby, deliberation and debate remain scarce, and both historical and fictional references substantiate communication and qualify social realities. Hence, political and social actors may generate new mythical or fictional cultural and ideological symbols in order to appeal to collective memory of the nation. Thereafter, political actors pursue the references that they have fictionalized as strategic discourses in order to generate collective rationalities to which they can appeal in order to substantiate their political preferences. Below, while elaborating on how I can apply the discursive governance paradigm to study forced migration, I will spell out the uses of collective memory following Mead's (1929 as cited in [Maines, Sugrue, & Katovich, 1983](#)) and Halbwachs' ([Coser, 1992](#)) dimensions of the theory.

For discursive institutionalism, institutions are internal to the sentient agents, serving both as structures (of thinking and acting) that are created and changed by those actors. This internal capacity to create and maintain institutions derives from agents' background ideational abilities' ([Schmidt, 2008](#)). Just as this is a generic term for what [Searle \(1995\)](#) defined as the "background abilities" that encompass human capacities, dispositions, and know-how related to how the world works and how to cope with it, so is it a generic term for what [Bourdieu \(1990a; 1990b\)](#) describes as the habitus in which human beings act following the institutions of a logic of practice. These background ideational abilities underpin agents' ability to make sense in a given meaning context, that is, to "get it right" in terms of the ideational rules or "rationality" of a given discursive institutional setting ([Schmidt, 2010, p. 55](#)). To contribute to this debate, discursive governance introduces that inasmuch as political actors can "discursively govern" such ideational abilities, be that they remain in the background and appeal to collective memory, they can affect collective rationalities and shift people in seeing what may otherwise be unacceptable as acceptable.

[Béland and Cox \(2011a, p. 11\)](#) indicate that for ideational scholars, cognition is a process of interpreting the world. Human cognition, therefore, has its own independent force, and the very ideas that our mental processes receive as we interact and communicate with significant others hold significant power and sway over our decisions and actions. In effect, how problems are defined has a substantial impact on what later becomes acceptable ([Mehta, 2011, p. 32](#)). Thereby, I propose that the power to set the agenda is a central tool for discursive governance. Once a problem definition becomes dominant, it excludes ideas that are not consistent with its way of describing the issue ([Mehta, 2011, p. 33](#)). A problem definition is similar to a frame in that it bounds a complicated situation by emphasizing some element to the neglect of another, but framing has been mostly employed as a term to describe how to

package a pre-existing set of ideas to win more adherents to one's position. Thereby, understanding (1) how political problems get defined and (2) why one problem definition prevails over another in a particular dispute (Béland & Cox, 2011b) assists us in reflecting on how, over time, "non-problem" gains acceptability.

Underlying the inculcation of ideas fundamental to discursive governance is the way skilled political actors frame a possibly "problematic issue" as a "non-problematic issue" with references to discursively constructed social realities. Appealing to collective rationality, they attach responsibilities to a fictitious world in which their followers believe and aspire to either reclaim or maintain. As these social realities gain resonance in the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015), actors may alter their understanding of their changing world, recalculating their priorities and interests. Methodologically, discursive governance can respond to some issues that have grasped the attention of ideational scholars, such as: "If ideas create institutions, then how can institutions make ideas actionable?" and "If instead ideas are "mental modes," then what stops ideas from having an effect on the content of interests and not just on the order of interests?" (Beland & Cox, 2011b).

As I have noted above, the political authorities' involvement in and interference with collective memory generation fundamentally affects the course of discursive governance. To this extent, I believe that such works of classical scholars of collective memory such as those of Mead (1929) and Halbwachs (as cited in Coser, 1992) present us with a useful conceptual framework. Referring to Mead (1938), Maines et al. (1983, p. 162) indicate that "the specious present is grasped by individuals in a given situation, which is an inherently social process since these situations are fundamentally characterized by the relation of an organic individual to his environment or world." It is hence "the social and temporal nature of the present that allows Mead to discuss the nature of the past." In this sense, continuity from the past to present "involves both the succession of events and acting persons who recognize it as a succession and render it intelligible as continuity. The world, things, and the individuals are what they are because of this relation" (Maines et al., 1983, p. 162). The construction of this relationship requires the involvement of skilled political actors – as I have already qualified, noting the importance of inculcation of ideas above.

Coser (1992, pp. 25–27) notes that for Halbwachs, the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present. Halbwachs argues that the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch. Collective historical memory has both cumulative and presentist aspects. It shows at least partial continuity as well as new readings of the past in terms of the present. While a society's current perceived needs may impel it to refashion the past, successive

epochs are being kept alive through a common code and a common symbolic canon even amidst contemporary revisions. In other words, Halbwachs' work shows how the present affects the selective perception of past history inasmuch as he stressed that our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present (Coser, 1992, p. 34). Hence, the making or revising of collective memory of the past to respond to the current problems of the present can assist the political authorities transform something problematic into something non-problematic in the collective rationality.

In effect to the making of collective memory, we also need to spell out the formulation and expression of narratives as tools of discursive governance. Briefly, narratives serve the dual purpose of providing an explanation of events while allowing individual interpretation (Bruner, 1996). It is through explanation that an individual develops an understanding not only of how the world is progressing, but also of how he or she fits within the story of progression (Bruner, 1996; Paterson & Monroe, 1998). Narratives are not neutral representations of current conditions, but can serve to suggest an interpretation of what the state of the world ought to be. The communicative function of narrative requires the narrative setting authorities to persuade a broader audience to accept the legitimacy and appropriateness of their particular version of a situation. Thereafter, discourse circumscribes the range of subject and object through which people experience the world, specifies the views that can be legitimately accepted as knowledge, and constitutes actors taken to be the agents of knowledge (Fisher & Gottweis, 2013). Essentially, political authority can have an impact on this process via setting rules that do not just regulate, but also create the possibility of the very (forthcoming) behavior and thought patterns that they regulate (Searle, 2010). I will, in the following section, delineate the uses of collective memory for discursive governance of immigration considering this conceptual debate. Following these different theoretical tools and concentrating on how the political authority feels the need to justify, permeate, and inculcate their innovative solutions in the public sphere faced with refugees, this article re-interprets the discursive institutionalization literature (Béland & Cox, 2011b) to endorse "discursive governance." Its empirical material is the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey.

In order to depict and debate first the development of narratives and thought patterns supporting a selective humanitarian approach and second the inculcation of Syrian as acceptable refugee within Turkish collective memory, I will elaborate on the following theoretical position. Ad hoc political discourses qualifying the Syrians as guests and brothers circulated in the public sphere generate a space where politicians configure, transmit, and initiate politics discursively, rather than vouchsafing substantial policy change in effect to governance toward a comprehensive policy

change in asylum regime. Hence, we have some “acceptable” refugees accessing – temporarily – protection in Turkey while others remain insecure and devoid of rights even if they also suffer from comparable humanitarian crises. The Syrian is marked as a “guest” that needs protection whereas the migrant is perceived as a threat. Hence, this discourse influences the public sphere in a way that the public accepts Syrians as temporary guests while politically Turkey does not accept non-European refugees. Refugees do not have rights; they have temporary qualifications based on their inherent characters. Reception and integration are not embedded in a policy framework, but constructed discursively. Consequently, the political narration of forced migration from Syria appeals to the collective memory of the Turkish state as a “charitable” polity. Essentially, a skilfully generated and somewhat fictitious collective memory resonates in the public sphere that Syrians are acceptable, but migration is temporal and the government’s response to forced migration is not to unsettle the social coherence of Turkey.

Methodology

In order to reflect on the validity of the conceptual framework and theoretical assumptions introduced above, I first reviewed the political metanarrative in response to forced migration from Syria. To delineate what type of strategic discourses that the political authorities set, particularly with references to the collective memory of the Turkish nation, I subsequently carried out interviews with bureaucrats as administrators of the crisis at two levels. The first level was the central level, that is, officials based in Ankara where I held interviews at Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I also interviewed officials in the Ministry of Labor in a focus group format, given the formal and informal labor in which the Syrian refugees have engaged.

The second level was the local in order for me to appropriate the divergence between the central and local bureaucracy regarding the handling of Syrian refugees. In Gaziantep, I interviewed the regional Governor in charge of the Syrian refugee crisis and the AFAD chief, and in Kilis, the Governor, given his position serving in a small border province facing swelling numbers of refugees. Gaziantep and Kilis are also the provinces where Turkish citizens often claim to have “family” links with Syrians across the border. Especially in Kilis, where the economy is mostly based on smuggling, kinship relations have remained stronger over the years due to the economic relations across the borders. The existence of relatives and business partners across the border on the Turkish side motivated many Syrians to flee to Kilis (Özden, 2013). Yet, these provinces also feel the impact of Syrian refugees on businesses, the labor market, and access to such public services as healthcare and education as well as crowding out in the housing market due to increased population.

Therefore, the empirical material of this article relies on an analysis of how politicians' discourse taken from the media on the Syrian refugee crisis has resonated with those bureaucrats who actually deal with the refugees and who serve at the central and the local levels of public administration. Following [Leudar and Nekvapil \(2004, p. 247\)](#) indicating that "media texts are addressed not to a specific person or sets of persons with known properties, relevancies and beliefs, but rather to a public at large," I take the Turkish public sphere as the social context and de-emphasize the immediate contextual factors regarding politicians' framing of the Syrian issue. This is due to my observation that the politicians, and especially President Erdoğan, formulate their discourses not for the immediate audience, but for consumption by the general public, being sure of the role that the media will play in the subsequent dissemination of such discourses in a country where media freedom is limited (for China see [Lu, Aldrich, & Shi, 2014](#)).

As the public sphere is dominated with the ruling politicians' discourse on the issue in an increasingly unfree political system, there may be concerns for researchers to account for full partiality of the bureaucrats. This could compromise reflexivity in data collection as well. However, this reflexivity problem should be understood in view of the general concerns that discursive scholars face in their work on politically unfree contexts. For us, there is value in delving deep into the context and building local knowledge around which research problems take form. Then, how can we account for impartiality in the discourses of the interviewees influenced by the general political narrative on the issue? [Fairhurst \(2009, p. 1609\)](#) argues that "without the pressure to build generalizable theory, discursive scholars feel freer to embrace the context and, especially, its historical, cultural, and political aspects." Yet, should a comprehensive elaboration of historical, cultural, political factors specific to the context preclude theoretical generalizations? While it goes beyond the remit of this article to offer comprehensive responses to these questions, it still underlines that discursive studies gain from following narratives imbued with historical, cultural, and political characteristics of the context.

During data analysis, this study approached neither the interviewee nor the interview texts with preconceived ideas or themes and categories deduced from theory. Instead, it adopts an inductive approach. My approach to frame analysis, in this respect, originates from [Goffman's \(1974\)](#) work and follows its later applications in [Tankard, Hendrickson, Siberman, Bliss, and Ghanem \(1991\)](#), and [Lau and Schlesinger \(2005\)](#). This approach allowed the interviewees to reflect on general questions relating to how the Syrian refugee crisis evolved to affect Turkey, how they are involved in the handling of the crisis, why they think Turkey should be an active party to the crisis, and whether Turkey's position is sustainable. However, as the discussion progressed, I raised relevant follow up questions. With the exception of the Ministry of Labor, all interviews were one to one, but the Head of Department in the former brought together

his team in order for us to debate and exchange ideas on what they were doing and what I would recommend them to do. Rather than giving recommendations, however, I had a chance to see how the focus group participants followed on and reacted to each other's positions. In this respect, the most pro-government response came from the last person I interviewed – a participant with family links to Gaziantep – that the religious links between the Syrian refugees and the Turkish nation were too important not to act upon even though westerners would find it hard to understand this.

In the coming sections, while reviewing the discursive constructions such as the historical and religious responsibilities of the Turkish nation toward Syrians and the bureaucrats socio-political obligation to continue with “what has always been the case” with Turkish state traditions, I will bring in direct quotations from the interviews. The interviews were held in Turkish. The translations are mine.

Given the limited formal institutionalization of the migration regime despite some policy signals by the government, I consider that the ad hoc slogans in circulation generate a discursive space where politicians configure and transmit migration politics ideationally. The Turkish position toward the forced migration of Syrians is a case of ideational politics. This is based on my theoretical assumption that inasmuch as the AKP operates migration politics merely through discourses, it avoids possible socio-political and economic conflicts that a full-scale policy change aiming at providing refugee rights for all, including the Syrians, and the integration of Syrians would imply. This is the reason why I have chosen to study the Turkish response to the forced migration of Syrians to Turkey through tracing discourses.

Discursive Making of Syrian “Guests,” the Refugee Crisis “Temporary,” and Turkey’s Responsibility “Historical”

Since the beginning, the two AKP governments led first by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan and, later, by Davutoğlu have continuously showed a keen interest in taking sides in the Syrian civil war. I have hence reviewed certain political speeches of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and President Erdoğan while he was Prime Minister until 2014. In effect, the metanarrative that [Davutoğlu \(2013\)](#) set has been “humanitarian diplomacy” in order to justify Turkey’s engagement with the Syrian refugee crisis in particular and, more generally, to embellish a new character into Turkey’s role in its neighboring regions. Humanitarian diplomacy means that Turkey’s influence should be felt in a wide geographical area, not only symbolizing its power, but also symbolizing its conscience ([Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 867](#)). It is based on a critical equilibrium between conscience and power that necessitates Turkey to be a compassionate and powerful state. [Davutoğlu \(2014, p. 867\)](#) continues:

One will be compassionate if one's conscience dictates where one should go and to whom one should reach, as can be seen from the examples of our aid to Somalian and Syrian refugees. At the same time, one will need to have power, so that one has the ability to reach where needed.

Yet, the Turkish authorities also realized that their humanitarianism in fact turned into cushioning a possible international reaction to the Syrian regime rather than triggering action. The then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu asserted at the UN in 2012 that there was an increasing sense in Turkey that, through making such a sacrifice and tackling an enormous issue all by itself:

We are leading the international community to complacency and inaction. We feel that the open door policy of Turkey and the other neighbors of Syria is actually absorbing the potential international reaction, as the tragic consequences of the brutality by the regime in Syria are all being dealt with by the neighboring countries (Davutoğlu, 2012).

Reflecting on the Turkish protection of Syrian refugees, Davutoğlu suggested that:

[W]e do all these with a sense of high responsibility as we regard our Syrian neighbors as our brothers and sisters with whom we share a long history and often a common fate. [...] However, the scale of the tragedy in Syria has grown so out of proportion that Turkey finds it increasingly difficult to cope with the ensuing challenges all by itself (Davutoğlu, 2012).

This proposal led to two ministerial meetings among the countries bordering Syria under the UNHCR premises to draw the attention from the international community to the situation of Syrian refugees. Yet, it fell short of delivering an international intervention, for which the AKP had hoped as a solution to the Syrian crisis.

The then Prime Minister – now President – Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement that "Syria is Turkey's internal affair" illustrates that the importance that the Syrian crisis has received in the higher echelons of the AKP. In April 2013, Erdoğan said, "Turkey showed its belief in international protection of refugees with extending temporary protection to the Syrian refugees en masse." (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İçişleri Bakanlığı*, 2013) More recently in May 2015, during a visit to Albania, Erdoğan reminded the EU of its obligations to refugees as he indicated that Turkey had kept an open door policy to Syrian refugees and the EU should also keep a similar policy to those coming through the Mediterranean. "Are we going to stay oblivious to poor, homeless, stateless people? Isn't it the obligation of developed nations to offer solutions for these people? We say that everyone should bear their responsibilities." (t24. *Bağımsız İnternet Gazetesi*, 2015).

In line with this political discourse, AFAD has been the most fundamental state agency in dealing with the forced migration of Syrians. Rather than a refugee agency, it has been AFAD that has registered Syrians upon entering Turkey since the beginning. Essentially, this is an authority that deals with disasters. Amidst the Syrian refugee crisis

however, it has turned into an organization handling refugee relief operations. As AFAD operates under the Prime Minister's Office, its active engagement illustrated the attempt to centralize the refugee crisis directly under the then Prime Minister Erdoğan. In this respect, insomuch as Erdoğan has actively been engaged with the Syrian crisis, AFAD has become the main hand of central administration. Yet, as disasters, by their very essence, are temporal, retaining the handling of mass movement of people from Syria into Turkey under AFAD's remit, primarily helped the political authorities to convey to the public that Syrians' presence in Turkey was temporary. In February 2014, at an interview in Ankara, an AFAD official qualified their role in responding to refugee crisis as follows:

As the refugee crises tend to imply emergencies, the 2012 declaration [that appropriated AFAD as the main agency of coordination] restrained the legal obligations of other agencies [... while] AFAD determines the policy at the center [...] but leaves its application to governorships. While we work under the office of the prime minister, we are above the provincial governors (AFAD Ankara Interview, February 2014).

Below, I give a brief account of my interviews and present how the strategic discourses feed into narratives of "selective humanitarianism" and "pragmatism" while conveying Turkey's response to forced migration to be temporary.

AFAD runs refugee camps in collaboration with the Turkish Red Crescent, registers Syrians, and issues them with identity cards to provide them with access to services. If the governors in provinces need staff in order to attend the needs of refugees in camps, AFAD either provides them or organizes with other provincial governors to transfer personnel. AFAD is in charge of all expenses related to relief operations. During the interview at AFAD's Gaziantep office in May 2014, I witnessed that the AFAD official practically signed all requests for payment issued by the Governor's office to local hospitals and various businesses supplying daily amenities in relation to Syrians' expenses at the camps. When I asked him how long this would continue, he simply stated that until the state told the Syrians that it was time to leave.

Essentially, they are not our personal guests. They are the guests of the state. That is why we would not use any [personal] initiative when it comes to dealing with them. We act in co-ordination with Ankara. We have learned by doing, and established an informal structure without formality (Gaziantep, AFAD, May 2014).

The interviewee also complained about the increasing rents in Gaziantep as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees. When I inquired at AFAD in Ankara why they were dealing with Syrians, the interviewee indicated that they were experienced from the previous Bulgarian (1989) and Iraqi crises (during the Gulf Wars) and suggested that these experiences stimulated an "initial brainstorm." The interviewee's reflection on the crisis management framework that had been established was as follows:

Does this [AFAD's involvement] have any legal provision? AFAD considers migration as crisis and deals with it via humanitarian aid. [...] The open door policy is so extensive that you can bring it into political debate or [consider it within the frame of] humanitarian aid issues. You can even consider it as a military issue. Had it been a military crisis, this would have been delegated to security forces. However, as this is considered a humanitarian crisis since the first entry on April 29, 2011, AFAD became involved (Ankara, February 2014).

My next query to AFAD was related to the sustainability current policy, given the unremitting nature of the influx of refugees. The AFAD interviewee in Ankara put forth how the government maintains its position vis-à-vis the Syrians in public sphere as follows: "The Turkish people in terms of assistance are strangely unique [...] and people support this assistance structure individually." When I further inquired on their institutional culture reflecting on Turkey's culture, the interviewee stated:

We are a very practical country. Take the West as an example. If there were to be humanitarian assistance for somewhere, believe me, it would be very difficult. Turkey is very practical. It is so simple with us since [our advantage is that we are] under the authority of the Prime Minister's office, perhaps thanks to our public administration structure, perhaps thanks to our social structure.

It is hard to miss a reference in these claims to a collective memory of "how things have been and are" in Turkey and Turkish society when it comes to dealing with crises. Framing Turkey's responses with these narratives helps to substantiate humanitarianism. However, this does not present any indication of an inclusive and institutionalized response that may attend to providing relief to all refugees currently in the country. As we will see, when reflecting on Syrians, references to collective memory were also apparent during interviews with other officials. I consider these references as tools to narrate the Syrian refugees as "guests" in comparison to the troubling essence of having refugees in general.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) coordinates Turkish humanitarian efforts responding to forced migration from Syria with international agencies "not within the political but the legal frame of the crisis" (MFA interview 1, Ankara, February 2014). MFA personnel have been deployed in Southeastern Turkey in order to engage with the visiting international delegates. Their role implies that "they [operate] in the name of the international community; this is a problem of international community. When Turkey assumes responsibility, it is decreasing the extent of [the] burden [that the Syrian refugees pose] on the international community" (MFA interview 1, Ankara, February 2014). As I have also depicted above, the responsibility for refugees, assumed in the name of the international community, resonates in Turkey's discourse at the UN level.

Along with the much emphasized special nature of Turkish people, ample economic means of the Turkish state and its pragmatism, interviews at MFA as well

as Ministry of Labor also pointed to Turkey's responsibility for Syrians, given its imperial past in the Middle East and the collective memory of what prevails in the population concerning the generosity and charity of the Turkish polity. Whether this was successful or not, according to the interviewee at MFA, is open to speculation.

We need to consider the reasons that form the basis of these assessments. Now, if we were going to ... I will relate this to migration ... in a country that has 900 kilometers worth of borders, and especially if this country is Syria. Well, if we consider the interrelationship between the Turkish and the Syrian populations perhaps for centuries, well there can be no argument for closing the borders for Syrians (interview 2 at MFA, Ankara, February 2014).

The tone of debate at the Ministry of Labor in Ankara conveyed similar themes:

Now, consider our national values, cultural values, historical friendship, let's say brotherhood, the basic reason that we are assisting the Syrians at the moment starts from here and goes up to politics at higher levels, including the Prime Minister [then Erdoğan]. Now, we have these basic values. It is difficult to explain our alms giving institution abroad. Everyone gives money to their poor without expecting anything in return. Isn't that so? Economically, in fact, this is not rational. Now, we did something under these circumstances and they came. This is our basic justification: People should not suffer (focus group interview at ML, Ankara, February 2014).

Yet, the extension of temporary work permits to Syrians also implies practical advantages for Turkey's economy as they enter into informal labor with payments lower than the minimal salary and lack of work safety. When interviewed, ML was oblivious to these issues and reflected once more on the generosity and facilities of Turkish polity.

[I]f the question is whether our labor market needs these people or not, well no. But the occupation of these people is a type of social policy. Turkey has facilities. Well, when you look into our state traditions, from the beginning in similar situations, the state has always striven to maintain its social state role and now it tries to do the same.

The interviews with local bureaucrats presented a more realistic perspective of the implications of Turkey's engagement with Syrian refugees. Although references to collective memory of Turkey's responsibility for its neighbor were still evident, there emerged also doubts of Turkey's capabilities for continuous commitment to the crisis. The two governors interviewed in the region in May 2014 indicated the insufficient financial and administrative capacities of their offices in terms of limited number of Arabic speakers and budgets at the time of the interviews. Hence, according to Governor 1:

We feel the crisis in Syria within ourselves and the people over there are our relatives. And we will do as much as we can. However, despite this discourse, this is not how we are in the field. That is my real worry [...] Well, these are our religious brothers. [...] Now, those who do not suffer would not know the troubles of those that suffer and the people over

there have close kinship with Turkey. If this happens to you where would you go? You go to where your closest relatives are. These are fallen [people]. Now when we say this, we can convince our people. However, if at the beginning some of us oppose and some of us support, this would not work. [...] These people are entrusted to us by our ancestors (Interview, May 2014).

Despite the tone of responsibility, Governor 2 was more forthcoming to accept the absence of long-term planning beyond immediate pragmatism.

There is an end to patience. As time goes, these Syrians will organize themselves. There can be conflicts of interests. There ought to be planning, problem solving, regulating considering the long duration [of this crisis]. Integration is very important. The integration of our people is also very important. We need mutual cooperation.

Thereby, a process of “discursive governance” that appeals to the collective memory of the Turkish state as a “charitable” polity with close personal relations with the Syrian nation dominates “innovative” policy making at the central and local administration. At the same time, by putting an emphasis on “how things have been and are” in Turkey and Turkish society, the interviewees are referring to a collective memory of Turkish generosity in the region. What affects inclusion then is historical and moral responsibility rather than prevailing humanitarianism per se. In other words, those refugees that deserve responsibility are also the ones framed as Turkey’s “relatives” and “religious brothers.” Hence, Syrian refugees, possibility problematic for public philosophy regarding migration in Turkey (Korkut, 2014), are transformed into acceptable refugees with strategic discourses including widely fictional state traditions, social responses, and the collective memory of the Turkish nation.

Conclusion

This article shows that following a discursive methodology to examine forced migration could be an effective method to understand how temporal and selective responses emerge in politics guided by metanarratives rather than institutionalized policy solutions. In effect, when investigating how metanarratives affect the governance of forced migration, I have illustrated discursive governance as a process in which political discourses have become normative mechanisms used to influence the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015). Thereby, the politicians set the agenda of their response to forced migration through metanarratives that later formulate strategic discourses expressed by public administration in handling the crisis.

To support discursive governance, political authorities appeal to the public’s collective rationality. Hence, they attach responsibilities to a fictitious world in which their followers believe and that they aspire to reclaim or maintain. As these social realities gain resonance in the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015), they expect that

public actors alter their understanding of their changing world and recalculate both their priorities and interests.

These theoretical inferences rest on ad hoc political discourses expressed in interviews qualifying the Syrians as guests and brothers. These discourses are circulated in the public sphere to generate a space where politicians configure, transmit, and initiate politics discursively, rather than vouchsafing substantial policy change in effect to governance toward a comprehensive policy change in asylum regime. Hence, Turkey has some “acceptable” refugees accessing – temporarily – protection while others remain insecure and devoid of rights, even if they also suffer from comparable humanitarian crises. Consequently, the Syrian is marked as a “guest” that needs protection whereas the migrant, on the other hand, is a threat. Hence, this discourse influences the public sphere in a way that Syrians are accepted by the public as temporary guests while the government is trying to stop the arrival of others. What affects inclusion, then, is historical and moral responsibility rather than prevailing humanitarianism *per se*.

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